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I have been teaching for twelve years, and one thing that I have learned is that the best teachers never stop learning themselves. If I were to teach exactly as I did in the year 2000, it wouldn’t work for my students today. I have grown and learned so much more about teaching and kids and the high school age group. I have developed my own strategies and my own style. That is why I took this class directly after finishing my Masters. I want to continue to learn, to be able to help my students as much as possible.

My school is a small school in an economically depressed area. Over half of our students live below the poverty line. I teach all of the Freshmen English classes. When I was told that we had over one third of the incoming freshmen scoring at a level 3 for RTI, I knew I needed to do something to prepare for them. That is where this class came in. In this class I have learned strategies to help and encourage those students. I have learned how important it is to model good reading, and to show them I am a reader. It is important to give them opportunities to read in a non-threatening environment. Sometimes kids would rather be a discipline problem than read in front of their peers. It is important to make the classroom a safe place to read and make mistakes.

I have been able to create an action research project and work towards a goal of helping my students. I chose the subject of silent sustained reading because it is something that I feel very strongly about. I think kids need time to read, time to share and time to think about books. In doing my action research project I encountered some time management issues. It was difficult being on summer vacation and making myself do work. It was even harder when I was on actual vacation in California. I think I can somewhat understand what my students feel like when they are juggling so many different things with their homework.

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The most rewarding thing about the action research project is just knowing that I am thinking and researching to be a better teacher. I am doing it to make my students grow and learn, and hopefully become lifelong readers. That makes me feel good. That would be worth all of the late nights, when I just barely got my assignments in on time, or when I was staring longingly out at the ocean, wanting to be doing anything but my work.

After taking this class, I would love to mentor a new reading teacher! I would encourage them to keep learning and researching. I would encourage them to read the old research as well as the new, to see how circular things are in education. I would encourage them to be open to technology and in-cooperating it into their lessons. The most important thing that I would encourage a new teacher to do is read. A teacher cannot teach a love of reading if they are not readers themselves.